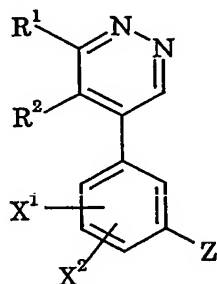


CLAIMS:

1. A compound of formula I, or an *N*-oxide thereof or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof:



(I)

wherein

X¹ represents hydrogen, halogen, C₁₋₆ alkyl, trifluoromethyl or C₁₋₆ alkoxy;

X² represents hydrogen or halogen;

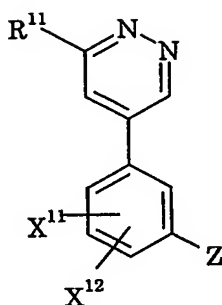
Z represents hydrogen, halogen, cyano, cyanomethyl, trifluoromethyl, nitro, hydroxy, C₁₋₆ alkoxy, formyl, C₂₋₆ alkoxycarbonyl, or an optionally substituted aryl, heteroaryl or heteroaryl(C₁₋₆)alkoxy group;

R¹ represents hydrogen, hydrocarbon, a heterocyclic group, halogen, cyano, trifluoromethyl, nitro, -OR^a, -OSO₂CF₃, -SR^a, -SOR^a, -SO₂R^a, -SO₂NR^aR^b, -NR^aR^b, -NR^aCOR^b, -NR^aCO₂R^b, -COR^a, -CO₂R^a, -CONR^aR^b or -CR^a=NOR^b;

R² represents hydrogen or C₂₋₆ alkoxycarbonyl; and

R^a and R^b independently represent hydrogen, hydrocarbon or a heterocyclic group.

2. A compound as claimed in claim 1 represented by formula IIA, and *N*-oxides thereof and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof:



(IIA)

wherein

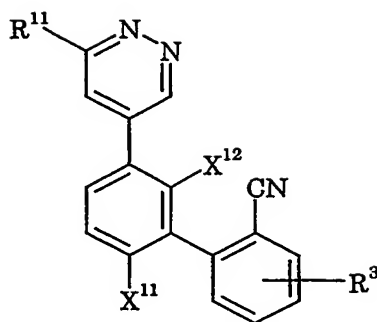
Z is as defined in claim 1;

5 X¹¹ represents hydrogen, fluoro, chloro, methyl, trifluoromethyl or methoxy;

X¹² represents hydrogen or fluoro; and

R¹¹ represents phenyl, halophenyl, dihalophenyl, trihalophenyl, (C₁₋₆ alkyl)(halo)phenyl, (trifluoromethyl)(halo)phenyl, C₁₋₆ alkoxyphenyl, (C₁₋₆ alkoxy)(halo)phenyl, cyanophenyl, (cyano)(halo)phenyl, C₃₋₇ heterocycloalkyl (optionally substituted by oxo), C₃₋₇ heterocycloalkenyl, heteroaryl (optionally substituted by one or more halogen atoms, and/or by oxo), C₁₋₆ alkoxy, C₂₋₆ alkenyloxy, aryl(C₁₋₆)alkoxy, triflyloxy, C₁₋₆ alkylthio, C₁₋₆ alkylamino, C₂₋₆ alkenylamino, C₃₋₇ cycloalkylamino, 10 aryl(C₁₋₆)alkylamino (optionally substituted by C₁₋₆ alkoxy) or C₂₋₆ alkoxycarbonyl.

3. A compound as claimed in claim 2 represented by formula IIB, and *N*-oxides thereof and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof:

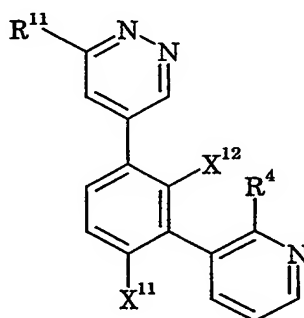


(IIB)

wherein X^{11} , X^{12} and R^{11} are as defined in claim 2; and
 R^3 represents hydrogen or fluoro.

5

4. A compound as claimed in claim 2 represented by formula
 IIC, and *N*-oxides thereof and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof:



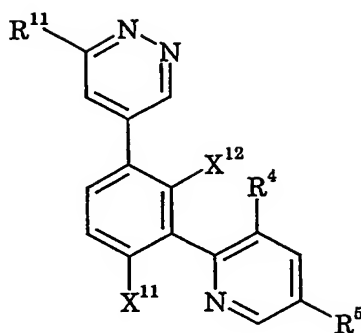
(IIC)

10

wherein X^{11} , X^{12} and R^{11} are as defined in claim 2; and
 R^4 represents hydrogen, fluoro, cyano or methyl.

5. A compound as claimed in claim 2 represented by formula
 15 IID, and *N*-oxides thereof and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof:

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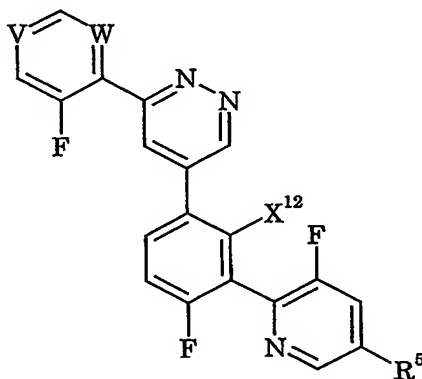
(IID)

wherein X^{11} , X^{12} and R^{11} are as defined in claim 2;

R^4 is as defined in claim 4; and

5 R^5 represents hydrogen or fluoro.

6. A compound as claimed in claim 5 represented by formula IIE, and *N*-oxides thereof and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof:



(IIE)

10

wherein

V represents N and W represents CF; or

V represents CF and W represents N; or

15 V and W both represent CF;

X^{12} is as defined in claim 2; and

R⁵ is as defined in claim 5.

7. A compound selected from:

- 3,5-diphenylpyridazine-4-carboxylic acid ethyl ester;
- 5 3,5-diphenylpyridazine-4-carboxylic acid methyl ester;
- 3,5-diphenylpyridazine;
- 5-[2-fluoro-3-(pyridin-3-yl)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 5-(3-isopropoxyphenyl)-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 3-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)benzaldehyde;
- 10 4,2'-difluoro-5'-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
- 5-(3-cyanophenyl)-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 5-(3-bromophenyl)-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 3-phenyl-5-[3-(pyridin-3-yl)phenyl]pyridazine;
- 3-phenyl-5-(3-[1,2,4]triazol-4-ylphenyl)pyridazine;
- 15 5-[2,4-difluoro-3-(pyridin-4-yl)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 5-[3-(2-methyl-2*H*-[1,2,4]triazol-3-ylmethoxy)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 6,2'-difluoro-5'-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
- 5-[4-fluoro-3-(pyridin-4-yl)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 20 3-phenyl-5-[3-(pyridin-2-ylmethoxy)phenyl]pyridazine;
- 5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-4-yl)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 5-[2-fluoro-3-(pyridin-4-yl)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 5-[4-fluoro-3-(pyridin-3-yl)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 25 [3-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)phenyl]acetonitrile;
- 2-fluoro-5-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)benzonitrile;
- 5-(3-nitrophenyl)-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 3-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)benzoic acid methyl ester;
- 3-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)benzaldehyde;
- 30 5-(3-fluorophenyl)-3-phenylpyridazine;
- 3-phenyl-5-(3-trifluoromethylphenyl)pyridazine;

- 5-(3-methoxyphenyl)-3-phenylpyridazine;
5,2'-difluoro-5'-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
3,2'-difluoro-5'-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
5-(4-fluoro-3-methoxyphenyl)-3-phenylpyridazine; |
5 6,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(4-fluorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
4-fluoro-3'-(6-phenylpyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
6,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(thien-2-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
6,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(4-methoxyphenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
5'-[6-(3-chlorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]-6,2'-difluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
10 6,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(pyridin-3-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
5'-[6-(4-chlorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]-6,2'-difluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
6,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(pyridin-4-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(4-fluorophenyl)-
pyridazine;
15 5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(2-fluorophenyl)pyridazine;
5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(2-fluorophenyl)-
pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(pyridin-3-yl)pyridazine;
5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(3-fluorophenyl)-
20 pyridazine;
3-(2,4-difluorophenyl)-5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-
pyridazine;
5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(3-methoxyphenyl)-
pyridazine;
25 6,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(2-fluorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
6,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(3-fluorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
3-[6-(3-fluorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]benzonitrile;
3-[6-(2-fluorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]benzonitrile;
3-[6-(4-fluorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]benzonitrile;
30 3-[6-(4-methoxyphenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]benzonitrile;
3-[6-(3,4-difluorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]benzonitrile;

- 3-[6-(2,4-difluorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]benzonitrile;
5'-[6-(2-chlorophenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]-6,2'-difluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
3-(4-methoxyphenyl)-5-phenylpyridazine;
4-fluoro-3'-[6-(4-methoxyphenyl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
5 5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(4-methoxyphenyl)-
pyridazine;
3-(4-chlorophenyl)-5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-
pyridazine;
2-{5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]pyridazin-3-yl}-5-
10 fluorobenzonitrile;
3-(4-chlorophenyl)-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(furan-3-yl)pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(furan-2-yl)pyridazine;
3-(2,3-difluorophenyl)-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-
15 pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(thien-3-yl)pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(thien-2-yl)pyridazine;
3-(2,5-difluorophenyl)-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-
pyridazine;
20 3-(3,4-difluorophenyl)-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-
pyridazine;
4-{5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]pyridazin-3-yl}benzonitrile;
N-[5-(3-bromophenyl)pyridazin-3-yl]-*N*-methylamine;
N-[5-(3-bromophenyl)pyridazin-3-yl]-*N*-isopropylamine;
25 *N*-[5-(3-bromophenyl)pyridazin-3-yl]-*N*-cyclopropylamine;
N-allyl-*N*-[5-(3-bromophenyl)pyridazin-3-yl]amine;
N-[5-(3-bromophenyl)pyridazin-3-yl]-*N*-ethylamine
N-benzyl-*N*-[5-(3-bromophenyl)pyridazin-3-yl]amine;
N-[5-(3-bromophenyl)pyridazin-3-yl]-*N*-(2-methoxybenzyl)amine;
30 5-(3-bromophenyl)-3-(2,5-dihydropyrrol-1-yl)pyridazine;
5-(3-bromophenyl)-3-ethoxypyridazine;

- 3-allyloxy-5-(3-bromophenyl)pyridazine;
3-(6-isopropylaminopyridazin-4-yl)benzonitrile;
3-(6-benzylaminopyridazin-4-yl)benzonitrile;
3-[6-(2-methoxybenzylamino)pyridazin-4-yl]benzonitrile;
5 3-(6-benzyloxypyridazin-4-yl)benzonitrile;
3'-(6-ethylaminopyridazin-4-yl)-4-fluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
4-fluoro-3'-(6-isopropylaminopyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
4-fluoro-3'-(6-propylaminopyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
3'-(6-cyclopropylaminopyridazin-4-yl)-4-fluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
10 3'-(6-allylaminopyridazin-4-yl)-4-fluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
3'-(6-benzylaminopyridazin-4-yl)-4-fluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
4-fluoro-3'-(6-methylaminopyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
4-fluoro-3'-(6-methoxypyridazin-4-yl)biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
3'-(6-ethoxypyridazin-4-yl)-4-fluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
15 3'-(6-benzyloxypyridazin-4-yl)-4-fluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;
5-(4-fluoro-3-hydroxyphenyl)-3-phenylpyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(2-methyl-2*H*-[1,2,4]triazol-3-ylmethoxy)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(1-methyl-3-trifluoromethyl-1*H*-pyrazol-4-ylmethoxy)phenyl]-
20 3-phenylpyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(pyridin-4-ylmethoxy)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(pyridin-3-ylmethoxy)phenyl]-3-phenylpyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(pyridin-4-yl)pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(pyrazin-2-yl)pyridazine;
25 5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(thiazol-2-yl)pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(pyridin-2-yl)pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(3-fluoropyridin-4-yl)pyridazine;
5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(1*H*-[1,2,3]triazol-4-
30 yl)pyridazine;

5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]pyridazine-3-carboxylic acid ethyl ester;

5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(2-fluorophenyl)-pyridazine-1-oxide;

5 3-(2,6-difluorophenyl)-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-pyridazine;

and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof.

8. A compound selected from:

10 3-(4-chloro-2-fluorophenyl)-5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]pyridazine;

5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(2-fluoro-4-trifluoromethylphenyl)pyridazine;

15 5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(2-fluoro-4-methylphenyl)-pyridazine;

3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]pyridazine;

trifluoromethanesulfonic acid 5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]pyridazin-3-yl ester;

20 3-ethylsulfanyl-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]pyridazine;

3-*tert*-butylsulfanyl-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]pyridazine;
5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(3-fluoropyridin-4-yl)-pyridazine;

25 5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)-pyridazine;

5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)-pyridazine;

5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(3-fluoropyridin-4-yl)-pyridazine 1-oxide;

30 5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(3-fluoro-1-oxypyridin-4-yl)-pyridazine;

5-[2,4-difluoro-3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-4-yl)pyridazine;

5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(2-fluoro-4-methoxyphenyl)pyridazine;

5 5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]-3-(2-fluoro-4-methoxyphenyl)-pyridazine;

3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-4-yl)-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]pyridazine;

3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-5-[4-fluoro-3-(3-fluoropyridin-2-yl)phenyl]pyridazine;

3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-4-yl)-5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]pyridazine;

and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof.

15 9. A compound selected from:

3-(3,5-difluoro-1-oxypyridin-4-yl)-5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]pyridazine;

5'-[6-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]-2'-fluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;

20 5'-[6-(3,5-difluoropyridin-4-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]-2'-fluorobiphenyl-2-carbonitrile;

4,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(3,5-difluoropyridin-4-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;

4,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;

25 2-{5-[6-(3,5-difluoropyridin-4-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]-2-fluorophenyl}-nicotinonitrile;

2-{5-[6-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]-2-fluorophenyl}-nicotinonitrile;

30 2'-fluoro-5'-[6-(2-oxopyrrolidin-1-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;

2'-fluoro-5'-[6-(2-oxo-2*H*-pyridin-1-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;

6,2'-difluoro-5'-[6-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)pyridazin-4-yl]biphenyl-2-carbonitrile;

5 3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-5-(4-fluoro-3-trifluoromethylphenyl)pyridazine;
3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-5-(6-fluoro-2'-trifluoromethylbiphenyl-3-yl)-pyridazine;

5-(6,2'-difluorobiphenyl-3-yl)-3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)pyridazine;

3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-5-(6,2',4'-trifluorobiphenyl-3-yl)pyridazine;

10 5-[3-(3,5-difluoropyridin-2-yl)-4-fluorophenyl]-3-(2,4,6-trifluorophenyl)-pyridazine;

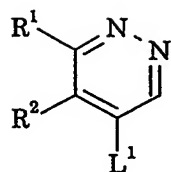
and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof.

10. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of
15 formula I, or an *N*-oxide thereof or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

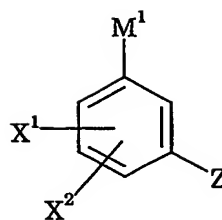
11. The use of a compound as defined in claim 1, or an *N*-oxide thereof or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, for the manufacture
20 of a medicament for the treatment and/or prevention of neurological disorders.

12. A process for the preparation of a compound as claimed in claim 1, which comprises:

25 (A) reacting a compound of formula III with a compound of formula IV:



(III)

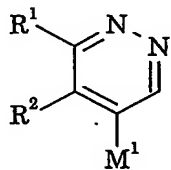


(IV)

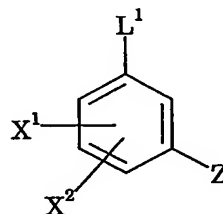
wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z , R^1 and R^2 are as defined in claim 1, L^1 represents a suitable leaving group, and M^1 represents a boronic acid moiety $-B(OH)_2$ or a cyclic ester thereof formed with an organic diol, or M^1 represents $-Sn(Alk)_3$ in which Alk represents C_{1-6} alkyl, or M^1 represents $-ZnHal$ in which Hal represents halogen; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; or

(B) reacting a compound of formula V with a compound of formula

10 VI:



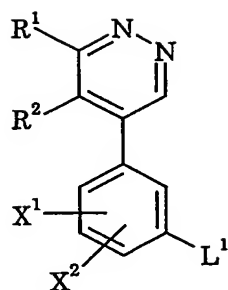
(V)



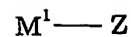
(VI)

15 wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z , R^1 and R^2 are as defined in claim 1, and L^1 and M^1 are as defined above; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; or

(C) reacting a compound of formula VII with a compound of formula VIII:



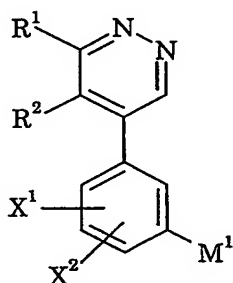
(VII)



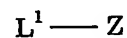
(VIII)

wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z , R^1 and R^2 are as defined in claim 1, and L^1 and M^1 are as defined above; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; or

- 5 (D) reacting a compound of formula IX with a compound of formula X:



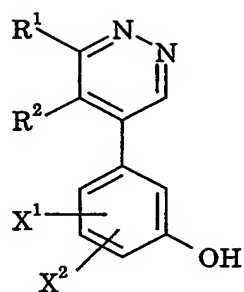
(IX)



(X)

- 10 wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z , R^1 and R^2 are as defined in claim 1, and L^1 and M^1 are as defined above; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; or

(E) reacting a compound of formula XI with a compound of formula XII:



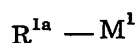
(XI)



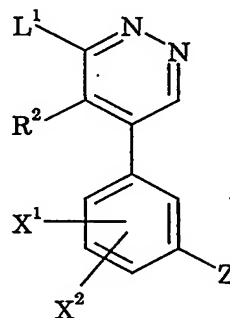
(XII)

wherein X^1 , X^2 , R^1 and R^2 are as defined in claim 1, and Z^1 represents C_{1-6} alkyl or optionally substituted heteroaryl(C_{1-6})alkyl; in the presence of triphenylphosphine and a dialkyl azodicarboxylate; or

(F) reacting a compound of formula XIV with a compound of formula XV:



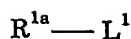
(XIV)



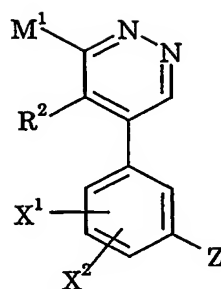
(XV)

wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z and R^2 are as defined in claim 1, L^1 and M^1 are as defined above, and R^{1a} represents an aryl or heteroaryl moiety; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; or

(G) reacting a compound of formula XVI with a compound of formula XVII:



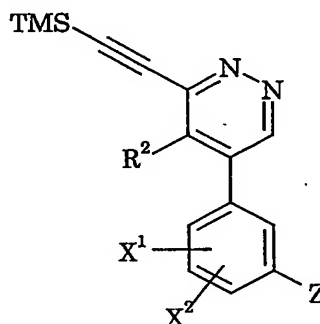
(XVI)



(XVII)

wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z and R^2 are as defined in claim 1, and R^{1a} , L^1 and M^1 are as defined above; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; or

5 (H) reacting a compound of formula XVIII:



(XVIII)

10 wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z and R^2 are as defined in claim 1, and TMS is an abbreviation for trimethylsilyl; with sodium azide; or

(J) reacting a compound of formula XV as defined above with a compound of formula R^a-OH , wherein R^a is as defined in claim 1; or

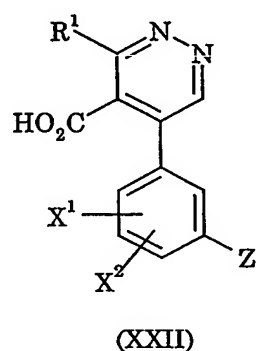
(K) reacting a compound of formula XV as defined above with a salt of formula $R^aS \cdot Na^+$, wherein R^a is as defined in claim 1; or

15 (L) reacting a compound of formula XV as defined above with a compound of formula $H-NR^aR^b$, wherein R^a and R^b are as defined in claim 1; or

(M) reacting a compound of formula XV as defined above with carbon dioxide and a compound of formula R^a-OH , wherein R^a is as defined in claim 1; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; or

(N) reacting a compound of formula VII above wherein L^1 represents a halogen atom with zinc cyanide; in the presence of a transition metal catalyst; or

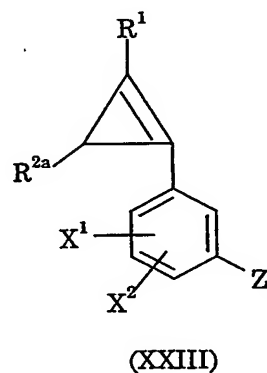
(P) reacting a compound of formula XXII:



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wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z and R^1 are as defined in claim 1; with diazomethane; or

(Q) reacting a compound of formula XXIII:



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wherein X^1 , X^2 , Z and R^1 are as defined in claim 1, and R^{2a} represents C_{2-6} alkoxy carbonyl; with diazomethane; and

(R) subsequently, if required, converting a compound of formula I initially obtained into a further compound of formula I by standard methods.

- 5 13. A method for the treatment and/or prevention of neurological disorders which comprises administering to a patient in need of such treatment an effective amount of a compound of formula I as defined in claim 1, or an *N*-oxide thereof or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

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